DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 117 816 EA 007 872

AUTHOR Hoyle, John R.
TITLE Evaluating an Alternative High School Program: A Beginning.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 22p.; Questionnaires may reproduce poorly due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Alternatives; Educational Research; Models; Performance Criteria; *Program Effectiveness; *Program Evaluation; Research Methodology; *Research Problems; Secondary Education; *Work Experience Programs

ABSTRACT

The methodological difficulty of evaluating alternative programs in specific, measurable terms is described. Based on an alternative program at Talawanda High School in Oxford, Ohio, the writer attempted to develop a model for evaluating an alternative program. The following evaluation procedures were selected: (1) attendance and grades prior to and during the two semesters of the project year; (2) two sets of pretest and posttest questionnaires administered to 25 students in the primary population and parents; (3) four sets of open-ended questionnaires filled out by students, parents, community agencies, and teacher advisors at the end of the project year; (4) nine-week anecdotal reports by the students; and (5) spot-check interviews with students, parents, community agencies, and teacher advisors throughout the project. (Author/MLF)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 101810

EVALUATING AN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM: A BEGINNING

John R. Hoyle
Associate Professor of Educational Administration
Texas A&M University

Secondary school educators have developed a missionary spirit to promote alternatives to meet the needs of more students. The September, 1973, National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin contained several articles describing the purposes and virtues of alternative secondary programs. M. E. Hickey's article entitled "Evaluation in Alternative Education" was timely because of the scantiness of literature on the topic. His article examined four major facets about evaluating alternatives in education. They were, "(1) some reasons for the current state of evaluation, (2) the purposes of evaluation in alternative programs, (3) problems and issues of evaluation in alternative programs, (4) consideration of some of evaluation processes for alternatives."

Any educator facing the task of evaluating a high school program should read Mr. Hickey's incisive article. The context of the article includes clear guidelines for planning and processing the evaluation. However, it, like other articles on the same topic, contains little advice in case your evaluation follows Murphy's law which states that "If anything can go wrong it will" and it did for this writer.

EA 007 872

Therefore, the purpose of the article is to help you conduct an evaluation of an alternative program when the unexpected happens. The reader should be forewarned that specific parts of this article will not pass close inspection by other researchers. This writer hopes that the "hard scientist" will have a little empathy for a colleague who had the best laid plans in the beginning, but had his plans altered by the unpredictable ways of high school students.

BACKGROUND OF THE ALTERNATIVE

In the Fall of 1971, Mr. Marvin Wilhelm, Principal of Talawanda High School in Oxford, Ohio, suggested to the high school staff the possibility of providing students an opportunity to have some learning experiences off campus as part of the regular program. The plan was encouraged by the Superintendent and the Board, and the writer was invited to assist in the writing of a proposal for Title III ESEA funding for the alternative program. The proposal guidelines called for measureable or behavioral objectives to assess the success of the program. The proposal was approved and this writer was asked to serve as the project evaluator of the alternative plan called the Community Service Unit.

Thus, the Community Service Unit was established, beginning in the 1973-74 school year with the following description: Student Community Service Unit - a newly created elective course under each of the major subject areas, open to those juniors and seniors

at Talawanda High School who desire an off-campus, planned experience related to an area of their occupational or personal interest.

The course will be offered each semester for one half credit and a maximum of two credits. Students will be selected to participate on the basis of interest, personal need, parental approval and by a teacher advisory committee. A minimum of two hours a day will be required of each student during which he will provide service to a public or private agency or individual without an assured pay for his services. The task for the evaluator was to measure the success of the program based primarily on the measureable objectives written into the proposal. The evaluators in the Ohio Department of Education were well aware of the pitfalls in program evaluation. They encouraged flexibility and creativity in the evaluation process while having high hopes that a model with replication strength would emerge from the various funded alternative projects.

The writer felt confident that such a model was possible from the Talawanda High School Community Service Unit.

MEASURING THE OBJECTIVE

The first task was to develop the best strategy for measuring the behavioral or performance objectives. The objectives were as follows:

1. Given two semesters of community service and seminar related experience in one school year the students participating in project will demonstrate better school attendance than the previous year at the 5% level of confidence. The determination will be based on a time-series design which would assess the

attendance data for each quarter for the previous year and for the first year of the project.

2. Given two semesters of community service and seminar related experience in one school year, thirty per cent (30%) of the students participating in the project will improve their grade average by .3 (on a 4.0 scale) over the previous semester upon analysis of school records.

3. a) Sixty per cent (60%) of the students in the project will demonstrate positive attitude changes about their self-esteem, their school and community service activities. The changes will be measured by pre- and post- testing of the students using a Likert-type attitude instrument which will be developed in cooperation with a researcher. The 5% level of confidence will be used to determine statistical significance. The time period is one school year.

b) Parents of students in the project will observe a positive change in sixty per cent (60%) of the students' attitudes about their school, work, and self-esteem. The change will be measured by pre- and post- testing of the parents using a Likert-type attitude instrument which will be developed in cooperation with a researcher. The 5% level of confidence will be used to determine statistical significance. The time period is one school year.

c) "Employers" or community agency personnel who work with the students will observe a positive change in sixty per cent (60%) of the students' attitudes about their school, their community service and self-esteem. The change will be measured by pre- and post- testing of the employers using a Likert-type attitude instrument developed in cooperation with a researcher. The 5% level of confidence will be used to determine statistical significance. The time period is one school year.

d) Teacher advisers will observe positive changes in sixty per cent (60%) of the students' attitudes about their self-esteem, their school and community service activities. The changes will be measured by pre- and post- testing of the advisors using a Likert-type attitude instrument developed in cooperation with a researcher. The 5% level of confidence will be used to determine statistical significance. The time period is one school year.

4. The number of community agencies and individuals who wish to participate in the project will increase by 25% after the project has been in operation for one year upon extension of an invitation to participate by the school district.

5. Sixty per cent (60%) of the high school teaching staffs will indicate their willingness to support the project by volunteering to serve as a teacher advisor to one of the students in the project after the first year of the project upon their initiative to participate via some type of document.

ORIGINAL EVALUATION PLAN

The objectives listed above were to be measured for performance and attitudinal changes by applying traditional experiemntal research stategies. Objective number one and two were to be measured by gathering attendance and grade average records of the students prior and during both semesters of the project. As indicated in the objectives it was predicted that participation in the Community Service Unit would affect those involved in the program and would be reflected both in attendance records and grade point averages.

Objectives number three a, b, c, and d, were to be met by designing questionnaires and applying a pre-test, post-test control design. This design was to measure attitudinal changes in students, and the perceptions of parents, community agency personnel and teacher advisors about changes in student attitudes as a result of the program.

The final two objectives (four and five) to measure community agency and teacher participation were easiest to measure by counting the number of community agencies and teacher advisors willing to participate in the project for the coming year.

First Mistake. The writer's first mistake was to expect a definite number of students to enroll in the program from the beginning and to stay in it for the project year. Any evaluation is easier when the sample number is constant throughout. However, the sample number was rarely constant in the Community Service Unit.

Beginning with the spring of 1973, forty-five students, grades 11 and 12 of the Talawanda Local School District were accepted into the first year of the project.

Although forty-five students originally enrolled in the project, the number of enrollees continued to change as students left the program during the summer. Thus, by the end of the first week of school there were thirty-six students. Soon after the program was fully underway, an additional twenty-seven students enrolled. Thus a total of sixty-three students were in the program. Some of them left as a result of early graduation and others left as a result of schedule conflict. In addition, twenty-one new students started at the beginning of the second semester, making the second semester enrollment over sixty again. This was nearly twice the number originally anticipated when the program was conceived.

Of the twenty-three students who left the program at the end of the first semester, eleven were from the original group of students who pre-registered in the spring of 1973. Thus, there were twenty-five students who were originally pre-registered and who continued in the

program throughout the entire 1973-74 school year. These twenty-five students were the basis for the testing of the measureable objectives and were labeled the primary population. The secondary population was composed of the additional students who enrolled for one or more semesters, but were not part of the original pre-test group.

ADAPTED EVALUATION PLAN

The constant change in student enrollment caused an adaptation in the evaluation plan. After a few sleepless nights the evaluator made the following adjustments:

Attendance and Grades. Objectives one and two which were written to measure changes in grades and attendance were altered to use percentages rather than a more precise .05 significance level. Nineteen or 76% of the students in the primary group of 25 improved either their attendance or grade average during the project.

Attitudinal Measures. Pre and post test measures were gathered as originally planned (except for the control group) from the 25 students and their parents to investigate attitude change. However, the plan to administer pre and post questionnaires to community agency personnel and teachers advisors had to be changed. The evaluator determined that community agencies and teachers were working with several students at different times of the year. Thus, making it highly improbable that a statistical test would reveal any reliable information. Because of the problem, open-ended exit questionnaires were written and administered to the community agencies and teachers to gather their

overall impression of the students and the program.

The findings in the pre- and post- testing of students and parents revealed a significant positive attitude change among the students. The parents' attitude was not significantly changed.

Community agency and teacher advisor participation.

Objectives four and five were simple to measure. At the end of the project year, 25% more community agencies and 60% more teachers were willing to participate in the program for the coming year.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES

Obviously, the more objective evaluation of the 25 students in the primary population was important, but inadequate to describe the impact of the program on the total sixty-three students who worked with twenty-nine community agencies and thirteen teacher advisors. In order to gather more data the following alterations and additions were made in the evaluature process.

1. Student anecdotal records. In addition to daily logs kept by each student (at the end of the first nine weeks), each student was asked to write a short report explaining his participation in the program, kinds of activities that he performed, benefits he received, criticisms and possible improvements. If students comments from anecdotal records are an indication of success, the Student Community Service Unit was an unqualified success.

2. Open Ended Questionnaire. At the end of the project year, four different open-ended questionnaires were developed by the evaluator and administered to students, parents, the community agencies and the teacher advisors. With very few exceptions, everyone was positive about the project. Such responses by students as these were common: " I enjoyed the break from the school routine to do something important and interesting." Several parents wrote.."self respect was gained by my youngster... he gained the feeling of being useful and being appreciated." Similar favorable comments were made by community agencies and teacher advisors. Each group urged the program to continue as a regular part of the curriculum.

3. Spot interviews: Fifteen students in the program were contacted while on the job or in school. The contacts were very informal and conversations were developed in such a way that would not give the student any idea that he was being interviewed. Fifteen parents, community agency personnel and teacher advisors were also interviewed and concurred with the students that the project was a welcome addition.

SUMMARY

The purpose of the article is to describe an actual evaluation of an alternative high school program. It is very difficult to evaluate alternative programs which call for a precise quantitative process for

evaluation. Consequently, to date, no model has been developed that provides a set of statistical tests or practical guidelines to evaluate the results in specific, measureable terms. Thus, the writer attempted to develop a first model which would contain clearer guidelines to assist a high school principal and his staff in evaluating an alternative program. Unfortunately, evaluation models coming from America Educational Research Association literature and other prestigious research groups have contributed very little to the evaluation efforts of the busy school administrator.

With the above problem in mind and faced with the constant change in student enrollment this writer selected the following evaluation procedures:

---attendance and grades prior to and during the two semesters of the project year.

---two sets of pre- and post- test questionnaires administered to 25 students in the primary population and parents in May 1973 and again in May of 1974.

---four sets of open-ended questionnaires filled out by students parents, community agencies and teacher advisors at the end of the project year

---nine week anecdotal reports by the students

---spot check interviews with students, parents, community agencies and teacher advisors throughout the project

This article is also written as a challenge to other evaluators to develop more useable models to evaluate alternative programs. The processes described in this article have some weaknesses, but it is a beginning.

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION
For Talawanda High School Student Community Service

1. Agency: _____ Address: _____

2. Name of person responsible: _____ Tele. No. _____

3. Types of services available and needed: _____

_____

_____

4. Approximate number of man hours per day for each task listed above:

_____

_____

_____

5. Limitations (if any) on the times during a day or specific days that services above may be performed: _____

_____

_____

6. Special qualifications of student volunteers needed: _____

_____

_____

7. Summarizing numbers 3-5, approximate total number of students (avoraging 8 hours/week each) who could be used: _____

8. Please make additional comments and specifications not covered in the replies above: _____

_____

_____

_____

9. Under what circumstances (if any) will you be able to provide transportation for volunteers: _____

_____

SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE
STUDENT INVENTORY

PRINT YOUR NAME: _____

On the following pages are sixteen (16) statements that may be used to describe the effect of the school and community on student attitudes. Your task is to describe as accurately as you can your opinions. Do not attempt to please anyone with your response nor to respond the way you might think you are expected to do. Be completely honest in your opinions. Only one person (not in anyway involved with the school or the program), who will pay no attention to names except for later tabulations, will ever see these questionnaires.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read each statement carefully
2. Draw a circle around the number on the response form to indicate your opinion on each statement.

1. Your classes at Talawanda High School are meeting your needs.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Your teachers at Talawanda High School care about what you think.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Your parents or guardian support your ideas about your future work goals.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. You feel that the other students at T.H.S. care about you as a person.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Area people in businesses and other community agencies are concerned about you as a person.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. You like yourself and the things you can accomplish.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Your teachers at Talawanda High School are teaching you the skills and knowledge you need to be a success in life.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. The Principal and Assistant Principal are trying to help you become a successful person.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Your parents understand your feelings about school.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Do you think you need to attend a four-year college in order to be a success in life?

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Do you think that older people, teachers, parents, etc., trust you as a person?

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. A part time off-campus job or experience will make your classes at T.H.S. more meaningful.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. You look forward to each school day at Talawanda High School.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. You are proud of your accomplishments at Talawanda High School.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. Your teachers have the time and the desire to help you become well adjusted and happy.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. Your "in school" education has prepared you for "real life" in a community.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE
PARENT-GUARDIAN INVENTORY

YOUR NAME _____

On the following pages are seventeen (17) statements that may be used to describe the effect of the educational program on your attitudes or the attitudes of your son/daughter. Your task is to describe as accurately as you can your opinions. Do not attempt to please anyone with your response nor to respond the way you might think you are expected to do. Be completely honest in your opinions. Only one person (not in any way involved with the school or the program), who will pay no attention to names except for later tabulations, will ever see these questionnaires.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read each statement carefully
2. Draw a circle around the number on the response form to indicate your opinion on each statement.

1. Your son/daughter looks forward to attending Talawanda High every day.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Your son/daughter feels that other children at Talawanda High School care about him as a person.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. The teachers at Talawanda High School care about what your son/daughter thinks.

Never	Seldom		Occasionally		Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. The classes at Talawanda High School are meeting the needs of your son/daughter.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

5. Your son/daughter likes himself and the things he can accomplish.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

6. The principal and assistant principal at Talawanda High School are trying to help your son/daughter become a successful person.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

7. You understand your son/daughters feelings about Talawanda High School.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

8. The teachers at Talawanda High School are teaching your son/daughter the skills and knowledge he needs to be a success in life.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

9. Do children need to attend a four year college in order to be a success in life?

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

10. Is your son/daughter proud of his accomplishments at Talawanda?

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

11. Will a part time, off-campus job or experience make classes more meaningful for your son/daughter?

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

12. Do you trust your son/daughter to make his own decisions about his future work or career goals?

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

13. Does your son/daughter have a good attitude at home?

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

14. Would your son/daughter be happy in working for a business or community agency on a part-time basis as part of his high school experience?

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

15. Does your son/daughter get enjoyment out of helping others?

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

16. Your son/daughter keeps you well informed about what he does at Talawanda High School each day.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

17. In order to obtain a meaningful education, a high school student should be inside the school building six hours per day.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

STUDENT COMMUNITY SERVICE

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: _____

1. What did you like best in the Student Community Service Project?

2. Has school work been more acceptable to you since being in the project?

_____yes _____no

Explain:

3. List two or three things you have learned from your experience in the program.

4. Have you learned more about people in "real life" work or teaching situations since being in the project?

_____yes _____no

Explain:

5. Do you feel better prepared for the future because of the project?

_____yes _____no

Explain:

6. What did you dislike or like least about being in the project?

7. What changes would you like to see made in the policies and/or rules for participation in the project?

STUDENT COMMUNITY SERVICE

April 1974

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the appropriate answer and/or briefly answer the question. Thank you for your cooperation.

Student's Name: _____

1. What did your son/daughter like best about the Student Community Service Project?

2. Has school work been more acceptable to your son/daughter since being in the project?

_____yes _____no

Explain:

3. List two or three things your son/daughter may have learned or that you have noticed he/she has learned from his/her experience in the program.

4. Has your son/daughter learned more about people in "real life" work or teaching situations since being in the project?

_____yes _____no

Explain:

5. Do you feel that your son/daughter is better prepared for the future because of the project?

_____yes _____no

Explain:

6. What did your son/daughter like least about the project?

7. What changes would you like to see made in the policies and/or rules to improve the project?

STUDENT COMMUNITY SERVICE
COMMUNITY AND TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE APRIL 1974

_____ has either been associated with you
student's name
as a volunteer or (if you are a teacher) you may have had a chance to form some opinions about this student during the past school year. We must arrive at an evaluation of the program and we do appreciate your help. Please circle the Yes or No and add comments if you wish.

1. Do you feel that this program has in some way been beneficial to the student?

   Yes No

   Comments:

2. Have you observed any positive change in the student's attitude toward school?

   Yes No

   Comments:

3. As a result of this program would you feel better about recommending this student for employment?

   Yes No

   Comments:

4. If you were to evaluate the S.C.S. program based only on this student's record with you, would you call it a good program?

   Yes No

   Comments:

5. Do you feel that the benefits of student exposure to career and real-life experience justifies the Student Community Service program?

   Yes No

   Comments:

6. Do people in the community, other than those directly involved in public education, share responsibility for the quality of the products?

   Yes No

   Comments:

Agency Teacher

Please check one or the other:

Signature _____

STUDENT COMMUNITY SERVICE
COMMUNITY AND TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE APRIL 1974

_____ has either been associated with you
student's name
as a volunteer or (if you are a teacher) you may have had a chance to form some opinions about this student during the past school year. We must arrive at an evaluation of the program and we do appreciate your help. Please circle the Yes or No and add comments if you wish.

1. Do you feel that this program has in some way been beneficial to the student?

   Yes No

   Comments:

2. Have you observed any positive change in the student's attitude toward school?

   Yes No

   Comments:

3. As a result of this program would you feel better about recommending this student for employment?

   Yes No

   Comments:

4. If you were to evaluate the S.C.S. program based only on this student's record with you, would you call it a good program?

   Yes No

   Comments:

5. Do you feel that the benefits of student exposure to career and real-life experience justifies the Student Community Service program?

   Yes No

   Comments:

6. Do people in the community, other than those directly involved in public education, share responsibility for the quality of the products?

   Yes No

   Comments:

Agency Teacher

Please check one or the other:

Signature _____